



RSVP Connections

Connecting Senior Volunteers with Community Needs

July 2005

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Dear RSVP Volunteers and Friends,

For years, gerontologists have been speaking of the upcoming “Aging Boom” as Baby Boomers enter into retirement. This new group of retirees, the largest in the history of the country, is expected to affect everything from Social Security and Medicare, to housing design, to product marketing, and even volunteerism. A recent report by the Harvard School of Public Health-Metlife Foundation concluded that in order to attract Boomers as volunteers, existing voluntary or charitable organizations may need to develop new volunteer roles and recruitment strategies to account for this group’s interests and preferences.

It is anticipated that there will be differences in volunteering patterns between today’s older seniors and the Boomers, the newer seniors. The Greatest Generation (those currently 60 and older who came of age during WWII) has been unusually civic minded and very active in large organizations such as hospitals, the Red Cross, and even RSVP. They have made up much of the membership of the American Legion and the VFW, as well as the Lions, Elks, and Kiwanis. The Baby Boomers (those who are just turning 55) seem to be less likely to join large organizations. Perhaps because they may still be working, babysitting grandchildren, or traveling, Boomers are expected to prefer to volunteer episodically rather on a regular weekly schedule for a long period. They put a high value on social activism, and seek ways they can make an immediate impact through their volunteer service. They also look to volunteering as an opportunity for learning new things, meeting new and interesting people, and taking on leadership roles.

RSVP is ready to meet the challenge of the Baby Boomers. RSVP matches the skills and interests of people over 55 with specific service roles. Moreover, RSVP offers many opportunities for volunteers to put their skills, strengths and talents to work in an “impact-ful” way. In the face of budget crises, declining population, and job losses, our local area is rich in opportunities for volunteers to make a difference. Whether it is building houses for low-income families, giving tours of the Darwin Martin House and Graycliff, providing rides for elderly people, or tutoring a child...RSVP volunteers are improving the quality of life in our community in very real ways!

Making a difference...

Matching skills and interests....

Providing opportunities for leadership and growth...

RSVP is ready for the future of volunteerism!

Have a wonderful summer!

Pat Dowling

RSVP Director

RSVP Volunteers Making a Difference....

Volunteers sometimes ask, “What does RSVP do with all these timesheets?” and “Why do you need to know the number of meals I delivered/the number of TAP calls I made, etc”

Good questions! The answer is “Impact.”

Each RSVP program (like the Erie County RSVP) identifies specific areas of need in the local community, and develops RSVP volunteer assignments in agencies that address these needs. Each week, Erie County RSVP volunteers make a difference in the following area of needs:

Literacy	Cultural Heritage/Tourism
Poverty/ Hunger	Elementary Education
Delivery of Health Services	Outreach to Isolated Elderly
Transportation	Home Delivered Meals
Environmental Education	

So how do we know how volunteers’ service is making a difference in these needs? In other words, how do we measure the impact of volunteer service? **Impact** looks at more than just the number of RSVP volunteers, or even volunteer hours, at each agency. Impact shows the effect that volunteer service has on the individuals served, and on our community. Impact is more than the number of volunteers tutoring at a school; it’s children now able to read books on their own, or confidently do math problems. It’s more than volunteers delivering XX numbers of meals to the homebound; it’s that our elderly neighbors are more likely to eat an adequate and nutritious diet, so that their nutritional status improved. Even more importantly, 92% of recipients remain independent in their own homes.



RSVP Volunteer George Bulger helps students at Union East Elementary School

IMPACT AREA: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENCE EDUCATION

At the turn of the century, if you asked a child where milk came from, the response would be “A cow, of course”. Today, ask a child the same question, you might hear the answer “From Tops!” Our everyday lives are disconnected from the natural environment. The average adult spends 95% of his or her time indoors. Even children, regardless of where they live, spend most of their time indoors whether it is at school, playing video games, or watching TV.

Environmental education programs give children opportunity to observe the delicate and intricate workings of nature, to develop a sense of respect for our environment and an awareness of how natural resources may best be used and conserved. Moreover, many children can better understand scientific concepts when they have the chance for “hands-on learning” in a setting where

they can ask questions about nature and then discover the answer themselves. As part of these programs, many schools include at least one trip to a nature preserve, the Zoo, or the Botanical Gardens, where students can see, hear, and feel nature at work. Trained leaders, including more than 50 RSVP volunteers, guide children (and adults) and invite them to look more closely to see actual examples of habitat, adaptation, and other classroom concepts. On any spring morning, an RSVP volunteer may be pointing out the many forms of life that are contained in a pond at Tifft or Beaver Meadow nature preserves. A Buffalo Zoo volunteer may explain how the giraffe's long neck fits the demands of its natural environment. Botanical Garden volunteers conduct mini-classes on seeds, fruits, and other aspects of plant life.

We've asked teachers what they considered the most valuable learning experience for their students, as a result of the tours and workshops given by the volunteers, and heard:

"They especially like the Discovery Room: handling of bones and skulls—it fits directly into the Mammal Study we are currently working on."

"...the opportunity to get out of urban areas and see real examples of what we discuss in school. This was the first time some have been out of a city setting."

"They loved touching the snakes and the other animals and seeing them out of their cages. They also love to explore things. Some found snakes in the pond, bugs along the path, etc."

"...getting out in nature and seeing how they fit into their surroundings, and become more aware of life around them."

"You need to get a little dirty to study nature!"



RSVP volunteers are planting the seeds that will help future generations to be good stewards of the natural world!

Do you know someone who has a strong interest in science and nature, and would like to help to spark children's interest in scientific investigation, concern for the environment, and a sense of wonder in the world around us? RSVP has some exciting opportunities that are a perfect match!

ScienceFirst: Take an adult who is interested in nature and scientific investigation. Add a young person who wants to continue learning outside of the classroom---and you have the core of the Science Firsthand co-investigator team. There is nature in the city and adult mentors and young participants (ages 10-15) will explore it together from their base at one of seven Buffalo community centers, explore the grounds outside for insects and dig in the dirt, experiment with batteries and magnets indoors, and find out what "doing science" is really about. The Center will provide equipment and support. Each team will be able to choose an area of exploration, and report on results of their investigation to other teams at a city-wide Young Investigators Conference and on-line through the Science Firsthand website.

Buffalo Museum of Science/Tifft Nature Preserve's Authentic Learning Communities

program. Through a series of activities and investigations, students explore the biology and natural history of purple loosestrife and its impact on Western NY wetlands. Using authentic specimens, artifacts, research and experiences on invasive species, students will develop a plan of action to control loosestrife in their area. Volunteer opportunities include assisting with the Tift Nature Preserve's *Tift through Time* outdoor workshop, classroom presentations and schoolyard citizen science research.

Docents, including tour guides and workshop leader are always needed at the Buffalo Zoo, the Buffalo Museum of Science, the Buffalo & Erie Botanical Gardens, Beaver Meadow and Tift Nature Preserves. Each site offers an intensive training program. You'll learn a lot, meet interesting people (as well as interesting animals and plants!) and open a whole new world of discovery for others!

Call RSVP at 858-7548 for more info.

Do you have questions about Medicare? Insurance? Benefits?
Curious about housing options such as assisted living vs. nursing homes?
Wonder whether you qualify for tax rebates or utility reductions?
Do you need a speaker to address your community group or club?

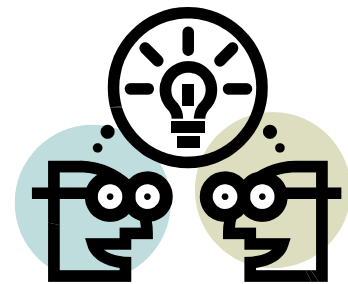
Erie County Department of Senior Services can help—Call 858-8526.

Information about many programs and services are available on the web at
www.erie.gov/depts/seniorservices

The RSVP Advisory Council Needs YOU!

Want to share your thoughts about new and creative ways that RSVP can.....

- Get involved in new service projects?
- Recruit new volunteers?
- Spread the word about the impact of RSVP volunteers?
- Develop new sources of community support?
- Collaborate with other organizations?
- Make Tribute Day even more fun?



The RSVP Advisory Council invites any interested RSVP volunteer, volunteer supervisor, other

individual to join us at a meeting and find out about what we do! Because some of our members have completed their terms of service, there are several openings on the Council.

We meet on the third Wednesday of each month at 9:00am. In order to help the Council to learn more about the range of RSVP volunteer sites and opportunities, we hold each meeting at a different volunteer site each month. If you'd like to join us at a meeting, please contact Pat Dowling at the RSVP office at 858-7548. We're looking forward to hearing about your ideas!

Learning doesn't stop at the age of 55---it's a Lifelong Project!

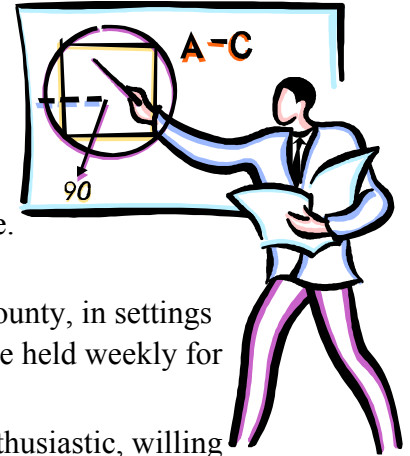
The Erie County Lifelong Learning Consortium is looking for retired university/college faculty and staff or other retired professionals willing to volunteer to teach one or two courses per year at a senior center.

Many older people are looking for opportunities to keep learning and keep their minds active, but may not be comfortable in a more traditional academic setting. Most college coursework is set for younger people preparing for employment or further study, while seniors are primarily interested in benefits such as intellectual stimulation, learning about new things, and meeting new and interesting people.

The goal of the Lifelong Learning Project is to bring high quality academic courses on various topics to senior centers throughout Erie County, in settings with comfortable facilities and good parking availability. Classes will be held weekly for 4-6 weeks. No tests, homework, or grades!

One guaranteed benefit for our volunteer faculty is students who are enthusiastic, willing to question and discuss, and there because they want to learn!

Call the RSVP Office at 858-7548 if you are interested in teaching.



TRIBUTE DAY 2005

Mark your calendars with a big star on **September 30, 2005**---the day of the Annual RSVP Tribute Day luncheon! Our volunteers and guests will once again enjoy a delicious lunch, the music of the Bar-room Buzzards, split club, great door prizes—and, best of all, the chance to mingle with hundreds of dedicated volunteers, as well as staff from our volunteer sites.

This year, the RSVP Advisory Council has added a new feature to this day of celebration. There will be tables in the dining room where local businesses and organizations will display information about their services. Not only are these businesses helping to support the costs of Tribute Day, but each one is also bringing a special raffle prize. Each person who visits the tables may be entered into the raffle for these prizes. The doors will open at 11:00am so that everyone will have time to visit the tables, and welcome our generous supporters.

Have Photos of You or Fellow Volunteers in Action??



For Tribute Day we hope to put together a presentation of recent (last 3 yrs) photos of our wonderful volunteers in action sharing your time and talents. Please send any photos you have (with identifying information) via email to mantonj@erie.gov, or snapshots to Pat Dowling, RSVP Director, 95 Franklin Street-13th Floor, Buffalo, NY 14202. We will return the snapshots—be sure to identify who, what, where, and your return address!!!

WELCOME NEW RSVP VOLUNTEERS...WE'RE GLAD YOU JOINED US

American Cancer Society - Judith A. Ehman, Thomas R. Tobias
Amherst Senior Center - Christine M. Balcerek, Carolyn S. Cardarella, Elizabeth A. Dotterweich, Sheilah A. Finnegan, Carol T. Hensel, Mary C. Lock, Vivien K. Parker
Boston Kazoo Band - Martha B. May
Boston Nutrition - Josephine Grapes
Brothers of Mercy - Ralph J. Siracuse, Mary M. Sondel
B&EC Botanical Gardens - John J. Deppeler, Joanna Langerak, Judith A. Rathman
B&EC Meals on Wheels - Grace F. Flaherty, Harold G. Kern, Mary Lou Lesser, Vera A. Mikolajek, Thomas F. O'Donnell, Elaine J. Vincent
B&EC Zoological Garden - Marie T. Knerr
Clarence Senior Center - Kenneth J. Adams, Henry W. Brodowski, Craig G. Carpenter, Emilio P. Corbelli, Thelma H. Keister, Hilda H. Maas, Lois Maines, Margaret H. McMillen, Bernadette M. Miranda, Violet R. Oldenski, Sally Percy, Arthur J. Sambuchi, Theresa M. Sambuchi, Ruth M. Snyder, Leonard J. Szeliga, Renee C. Williams
Community Concern - Mary M. Klier
Darwin Martin House - Ed Krawczyk, Karen B. Smith
Erie County Senior Fitness - Pat Casilio
Fletcher Elementary School - Sally A. Stubinger
Food Bank of WNY - Maggie Smith
Food Shuttle of WNY - Harold R. Hazen
Grand Island Golden Age Center - Irene M. Thompson
Habitat for Humanity - Tony C. Street, Richard Szewc
HIICAP - Irene A. Dearlove, Cheryl L. Pitz,
Lifelong Learning - Virginia M. Figura
Linwood Health Care – Carol A. Keicher, Theodora M. Pietrzak
Lutheran Church Home – Irene Willert, Helen M. Woelfle
Millard Fillmore (Gates) Hospital – Catherine M. Innes, James F. Innes, Jr.
Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital – Phyllis A. Slattery
Niagara Frontier Radio Reading - Boris “Chip” R. Spencer
Operation Good Neighbor - Lynne K. Albertson, Darlene DePasquale, Joan G. Warner
Roswell Park Cancer Institute – Donna M. Keefe
Rural Transit – Josephine M. Friend
Salem Concord Nutrition – Elizabeth A. Wagner
Tifft Nature Preserve – Jeanne M. Wittmann
Veteran's Administration Hospital – George J. Burgin, Thomas C. Green, Kenneth G. Kent, Albert Payne, Raymond P. Struski,, George A. Thayer, Fred Tomasello, Jr., Raymond E. Wood
Weinberg Campus – Clare Grelick
Winchester Elementary School – Virginia M. Bunz
WNED – Gerald C. Breidenstein



Volunteers at RSVP's newest community partner, Habitat for Humanity

Recognizing RSVP—You Do Great Things!

The 2005 Community Hero Awards, sponsored by the United Way and Univera, were announced at the Awards Breakfast. Congratulations to RSVP volunteers recognized as individual nominees:

Judy Gawronski, Delores Seufert, Rita English, Albert Sillato, and George Lasezkay.

And congratulations to the RSVP community partners recognized as group nominees: **Compeer, RSVP Group of the Lutheran Church Home, Operation Good Neighbor, and Rural Transit Service, Inc.**

And a round of applause for the winner of 2005 Community Hero Award (Group Category): **Food Shuttle of Western New York, Inc.**

The NYS Office for the Aging celebrated “The Art of Aging” at a Senior Citizens’ Month Reception on May 10 at the Governor’s Mansion in Albany. The reception recognized two older adults from each County as examples of active, vital and creative aging. Erie County’s nominees for this recognition were RSVP volunteers **Mike Petrinec** and **Naomi Gworek**. (Mike’s picture at right)



The 2005 Outstanding Community Service Volunteer Award from the Town of Tonawanda Senior Citizens Association was presented to RSVP volunteer **Bob Wood**. Bob is a volunteer in Erie County’s Health Insurance Information, Counseling, and Assistance Program (HIICAP). Bob assists seniors and their families through the maze of Medicare, Medicaid and Medigap insurance options, so that they can make informed decisions about their own insurance situations.

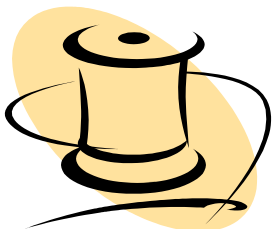
Congratulations to RSVP volunteers who earned the top awards at this year’s Volunteer Recognition Ceremony of the VA WNY Healthcare System:

VA Silver Tray (20,000 hours) - **Edwin Mills**

VA Silver Bowl (10,000 hours) - **Kenneth Blum, Jack DeBus, and Fred Finizio**

VA Plaque (8,750 hours) - **Casimer Napierala**

Hats off to **Joan Griffin**, Activities Director and Volunteer Coordinator at the Lutheran Church Home, who was recognized as “Employee of the Year”. Joan coordinates the RSVP group at the Home, a group of residents and volunteers that for several years have been lovingly sewing lap robes for young patients at Children’s Hospital.



Speaking of sewing... If you have boxes of extra fabric that are taking up room in your sewing area, here’s an opportunity for a “clean sweep”...Our RSVP volunteers at **West Seneca Senior Center** need cotton fabric for lap robes and other items they produce for local hospitals, nursing homes, and other organizations. Call the RSVP office at 858-7548 and we can help to get the fabric to our eager sewers!

Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan—Coming Soon

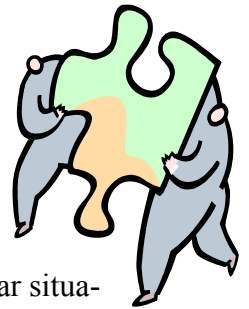
Starting January 2006, Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage will go into effect. Details are still being finalized, and New York's EPIC program will continue and may affect your choices.

Costs and coverage for plans will vary. Other programs will exist under Medicare HMOs such as SeniorChoice, SeniorBlue and Encompass 65. At this point, the Medicare Part D looks as if most people pay:

- \$37 monthly premium
- \$250 deductible
- 25% of the cost of covered drugs until you have spent \$2,250 in a year
- 100% of the cost of covered drugs after you have spent \$2,250 in a year
- 5% of the cost of covered drugs after you have spent \$3,600 in a year

Some people will qualify to enroll in a plan and pay no deductible, and little or no co-pays. Some will qualify for a reduced deductible, and others will qualify to pay a sliding scale premium and small co-insurance. Because this coverage is of interest to so many people, Erie County Senior Services HIICAP program will be offering outreach events to educate and assist people in choosing a plan and enrolling. While enrollment for most people will start late Fall, time is of the essence because if you do not enroll when eligible, your premium will be higher. Senior Services' website will try to keep you current—www.erie.gov/depts/seniorservices/health/insurance.asp.

HIICAP seeks volunteers, particularly in the City of Buffalo. Volunteers will be trained in local insurances, and assist peers in answering questions and making informed decisions about coverage. HIICAP is not a sales program, but offers information and counseling to help individuals determine the best solution for their particular situation. Depending on your interest, you could give presentations to groups, or counsel people one-on-one by appointment. Choose your own hours and work at a location near you. Become a HIICAP volunteer – help others with the health insurance puzzle. Call 858-7548



RSVP of Erie County
Dept. of Senior Services
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